

AN OUTLINE OF ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Motions

MAIN MOTIONS

- Brings new business before the assembly.

SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS (lowest to highest)

- **Postpone Indefinitely** (Kill a Motion) [1]
- **Amend** (Change a Motion) [1]
- **Refer to a Committee** (Let a Committee Investigate) [1]
- **Consider Informally** (Have The Assembly Act as a Committee) [1]
- **Postpone to a Certain Time** (Put Off to Another Time) [1]
- **Postpone to a Certain Time Made Into a Special Order** (To Ensure That a Motion Will Be Taken up at a Specified Time) [2]
- **To Limit or Extend The Limits of Debate** (Shorten or Lengthen Debate) [2]
- **Previous Question** (Stop Debate) [2]
- **To Lay on the Table** (Set Aside Temporarily) [2]

PRIVILEGED MOTIONS (lowest to highest)

- **Call for the Orders of the Day** (Stick to the Agenda) [2]
- **Raise a Question of Privilege** (Welfare of Individual/assembly) [3]
- **Recess** (Take a Break) [3]
- **Adjourn** (End Meeting Now) [3]
- **Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn** (Set Another Time to Continue the Meeting) [3]
- **Fix the Time at Which to Adjourn** (To Set the Time to Adjourn the Meeting) [3]

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS (no rank -- must be taken up immediately)

- **Point of Order** (To Correct a Breach in the Rules) [4]
- **Appeal From The Decision of The Chair or Appeal** (To Disagree with the Chair's Ruling) [4]
- **Request For Permission to Withdraw or Modify a Motion** (Withdraw or Modify a Motion Without Taking a Vote) [4]
- **Object to Consideration of a Question** (To Prevent the Main Motion from Being Considered) [4]
- **Division of The Assembly** (To Doubt the Result of the Vote) [4]
- **Suspend the Rules** (To Set Aside a Rule of the Assembly) [4]

MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY (when no other business is pending)

- **To Take From The Table** (To Take a Motion from the Table) [5]
- **Reconsider** (To Reconsider the Vote on a Motion) [5]
- **Rescind And Amend Something Previously Adopted** (To Change or Negate Something Previously Adopted) [5]
- **Discharge a Committee** (To Take a Matter out of the Hands of the Committee) [6-7]

MOTIONS THAT TAKE A MAJORITY VOTE

- Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn
- Adjourn
- Recess
- Lay on the Table
- Postpone to a Certain Time
- Refer to a Committee
- Amend
- Postpone Indefinitely
- Main Motion
- To Create a Blank
- To Request Permission to Withdraw a Question
- To Take from the Table

- To Reconsider
- To Rescind (With Previous Notice)
- To Amend Something Adopted (With Previous Notice)
- To Reopen Nominations or the Polls
- Discharge a Committee (Under Certain Circumstances)

MOTIONS THAT TAKE A TWO-THIRDS VOTE

<Any motion that takes away rights from members>

- Previous Question (Close Debate)
- Limit or Extend Debate
- Close Nominations or Close the Polls
- Object to the Consideration of a Question
- Suspend the Rules
- To Rescind (Without Previous Notice)
- To Amend Something Adopted (Without Previous Notice)
- Discharge a Committee (Under Certain Circumstances)
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POSTPONE INDEFINITELY

- Purpose: To kill the main motion for the duration of the meeting.
- Needs a second.
- Is not amendable, but while this motion is pending the main motion can be amended.
- Debatable, and debate can go to the merits of the main motion.
- Majority to adopt.
- Only an affirmative vote can be reconsidered.
- Result: Kills the main motion for the duration of the session.

AMEND

- Purpose: To change the motion; proposed amendments must be germane to the main motion.
- Needs a second
- Is amendable, but it must be germane or related to the amendment.
- Debatable. Debate goes only to the amendment.
- Majority vote to adopt. If amending a motion or document that takes two-thirds vote to adopt, the proposed amendment takes only a majority vote.
- Can be reconsidered.
- Result: If adopted, the proposed change becomes part of the main motion.

REFER TO A COMMITTEE

- Purpose: Have a small group investigate a proposal.
- Needs a second.
- Any variable in the motion is amendable.
- Debatable. Debate goes only to the merits of referring the motion to a committee.
- Majority vote to adopt.
- Can be reconsidered if the committee hasn't begun discussion of the motion.
- Result: If adopted, the motion goes to the committee to investigate and does not return to the membership until the committee is ready to report or until the membership has adopted a time for the committee to report back to the assembly.

CONSIDER INFORMALLY

- Purpose: Have the assembly act as a committee.
- Needs a second.
- Is debatable. Debate is on the merits of informal consideration
- Majority vote to adopt.
- Only a negative vote can be reconsidered.
- Result: If adopted, this motion enables the assembly to act as the committee. Its effect is to take away the restrictions on debating the main motion and any proposed amendments. Any other motions made are under the regular rules of debate. By a two-thirds vote, members can limit the length or number of speeches or can close debate.

POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME

- Purpose: To put off or delay a decision.
- Needs a second.
- The time element is amendable.
- Debatable. Debate goes only to the merits of postponing.
- Majority vote to adopt.
- Can be reconsidered.
- Result: Discussion and decision are put off until later in the meeting or until the next meeting when no business is pending.

POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME MADE INTO A SPECIAL ORDER

- Purpose: To ensure that a motion will be taken up at a specified time.
- Needs a second.
- Debatable.
- Time is amendable.
- A two-thirds vote to adopt.
- Can be reconsidered.
- Result: If adopted, it must be taken up at the specified time even if business is pending.

TO LIMIT OR EXTEND THE LIMITS OF DEBATE

- Purpose: To limit or extend the time of debate or the number of times a person can speak in debate; or to put a time limit on a particular motion. For example: to limit the entire debate to 30 minutes.
- Needs a second.
- Time element is amendable.
- Not debatable.
- Takes a two-thirds vote to adopt.
- Only an affirmative vote can be reconsidered without debate before the time limit expires. If partially carried out, only the time remaining can be reconsidered.
- If the motion has been voted down, it can be made again after there has been some progress in the debate.
- Result: It changes the standard rules of debate.

PREVIOUS QUESTION

- Purpose: To stop debate and immediately take the vote.
- Needs a second.
- Not amendable.
- Not debatable.
- Two-thirds vote to adopt.
- Can be reconsidered without debate before any vote has been taken under the order of the previous question.
- Result: If adopted, the members take a vote on the immediate pending question. If the previous question is called on all pending questions, then the vote is taken on all pending questions.

TO LAY ON THE TABLE

- Purpose: To set the main motion aside temporarily in order to take up something of immediate urgency. The intent is not to kill the motion or to put it off to the next meeting.
- Needs a second.
- Not amendable.
- Not debatable.
- Takes a majority to adopt.
- Can't be reconsidered. If adopted, it can be taken from the table; and if it is defeated, it can be made again after debate has progressed and something more urgent comes up again.
- Result: If adopted, it places the main motion and any of its adhering motions on the table or in the hands of the secretary. It stays on the table until someone moves to take it from the table.

CALL FOR THE ORDERS OF THE DAY

- Purpose: Make the assembly conform to the agenda or order of business, or make the assembly take up a general order or special order.
- Does not require a second.
- Not amendable.
- Not debatable.
- No vote is taken unless the members want to set aside the orders of the day, which takes a two-thirds vote.
- Cannot be reconsidered.
- Result: Stop whatever the assembly is doing and go to the orders of the day.

RAISE A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

- Purpose: Permits a member to make a request or a main motion relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly or a members and to consider it immediately, because of its urgency, while other business is pending.
- It does not need a second.
- Not debatable.
- Chair rules on the request.
- Result: The chair's ruling determines the outcome.

RECESS

- Purpose: To take a short intermission and then resume business where the members left off. As a privileged motion, a motion to recess is made when other business is pending.
- Needs a second.
- Length of recess is amendable.
- Not debatable.
- Majority vote to adopt.
- Can't be reconsidered.
- Result: Members take a short break.

ADJOURN

- Purpose: To end the meeting NOW!
- Needs a second.
- Not amendable.
- Not debatable.
- A majority vote to adopt.
- Can't be reconsidered but can be made again after some progress in the meeting.
- Result: It ends the meeting, and the business halts at the point where the members adjourned. If the members are in the middle of discussing a motion, this motion will come up at the next meeting under unfinished business and general orders.

FIX THE TIME TO WHICH TO ADJOURN

- Purpose: To set a later time to continue this meeting before the next regular meeting. In parliamentary terminology, it sets the time for an adjourned meeting.
- Needs a second.
- The time and date of the adjourned meeting are amendable.
- Not debatable.
- A majority vote adopts.
- Can be reconsidered.
- Result: Sets the date, place, and time for the meeting to continue.

FIX THE TIME AT WHICH TO ADJOURN

- Purpose: To set the time to adjourn the meeting.
- Needs a second.
- Amendable.
- Is debatable because it is an incidental main motion.
- Takes a majority to adopt.
- Can't be reconsidered.
- Result: The members must adjourn at the time they have now set for adjournment. When that time comes, the

presiding officer must announce that the time for adjournment has arrived and then adjourn the meeting. If members want to continue the meeting at this point, they must move to **suspend the rules** in order to continue the meeting.

POINT OF ORDER

- Purpose: To correct a breach in the rules.
- No second.
- Not debatable.
- Presiding officer rules on the point.
- Cannot be reconsidered.
- Result: The chair's ruling stands unless someone appeals it.

APPEAL FROM THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR OR APPEAL

- Purpose: To disagree with the chair's ruling and let the members decide the disagreement by taking a vote.
- Needs a second.
- Must be made at the time the ruling was made.
- Debatable. However, it is not debatable if it relates to rules of speaking, relates to the priority of business (order of business), or applies to a ruling on an undebatable motion.
- Not amendable.
- Majority or tie vote sustains the decision of the chair.
- Can be reconsidered.
- Result: If adopted, it upholds the chair's ruling.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO WITHDRAW OR MODIFY A MOTION

- Purpose: Withdraw or modify a motion without taking a vote.
- Does not need a second if asking permission to withdraw. Needs a second if modifying the motion.
- Not debatable.
- Vote by general consent when asking permission to withdraw.
- The vote to modify can be reconsidered. Only the negative vote in withdrawing the motion can be reconsidered.
- Result: When withdrawn, it is as if the motion had never been made. If modified, then it is presented to the assembly in the modified form.

OBJECT TO CONSIDERATION OF A QUESTION

- Purpose: To prevent the main motion from being considered.
- No second.
- Not debatable.
- Takes a two-thirds vote in the negative not to consider.
- Only a negative vote, not an affirmative vote, can be reconsidered.
- Result: If two-thirds of the members vote in the negative, then the motion cannot be considered for the duration of the meeting. It can be proposed again at another meeting.

DIVISION OF THE ASSEMBLY

- Purpose: To doubt the result of the vote.
- No second.
- Not debatable.
- Result: The vote is immediately retaken in a different way than it was originally taken.

SUSPEND THE RULES

- Purpose: To set aside a rule of the assembly (except bylaws or the corporate charter).
- Needs a second.
- Not debatable.
- Not amendable.
- Takes a two-thirds vote.
- Cannot be reconsidered.
- Result: Rules are set aside so that members can do something contrary to the rules.

TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE

- Purpose: To take a motion from the table.
- Needs a second.
- Not debatable.
- Needs a majority to adopt.
- Cannot be reconsidered.
- Result: Takes a motion from the table, and it now becomes the immediate pending business.

RECONSIDER

- Purpose: To reconsider the vote on a motion.
- Only a member who voted on the prevailing side can make the motion.
- Needs a second.
- Debatable if the motion it reconsiders is debatable.
- Majority vote to adopt.
- Cannot be reconsidered.
- Can be made but not considered when other business is pending.
- Result: If adopted, the motion is again before the assembly as if it had not been voted on.

RESCIND AND AMEND SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED

- Purpose: To change something previously adopted either by striking out the entire action or by changing part of it.
- Needs a second.
- Is debatable.
- Majority vote with previous notice.
- Negative vote only can be reconsidered.
- Two-thirds vote or majority vote of the entire membership without previous notice. (The reason for such a high vote is to protect the rights of the absent members.)
- Result: If this motion is adopted, the previously adopted motion is reversed or changed.

DISCHARGE A COMMITTEE

- Purpose: To take a matter out of the hands of the committee before its report is given so that the assembly can decide.
- Needs a second.
- Is amendable.
- Is debatable. Debate can go to the merits of the question in the committee.
- Vote required: If no previous notice has been given, either a two-thirds vote or a majority of the entire membership is needed, whichever is more practical to obtain. If previous notice has been given, a majority vote is needed. If the committee fails to report at the time specified or if the committee is giving a partial report, then it takes only a majority vote.
- Result: If adopted and if a motion was referred to the committee by a subsidiary motion, then the motion is immediately before the assembly for discussion.